

A William Casey view of WWII

THE SECRET WAR AGAINST HITLER
Nonfiction.
By William Casey.
Regnery Gateway. \$19.95

The Washington Post _____
The New York Times _____
The Washington Times _____
The Wall Street Journal _____
The Christian Science Monitor _____
New York Daily News _____
USA Today _____
The Chicago Tribune _____
Philadelphia Inq 3-5
Date *1 August 1988*

STAT

Here is a voice from the grave, telling history — his way. A year after his death, William Casey makes his case for the cause of his final years: a powerful CIA secure in public standing, unhampered, uninhibited, unapologetic in its actions, including the combat intelligence and guerrilla operations on which the book centers.

Casey somehow managed to write this book during 1985 and '86, despite his intense CIA work and declining health. Clearly, it meant a lot to him.

Casey was upholding not only the CIA's legitimacy in American life, but also his own in the pantheon of American intelligence heroes. This book reminds everyone that he, a man of modest background, had achieved much in the Office of Strategic Services — the CIA's predecessor — and stood as close to William J. Donovan, the charismatic godfather of American intelligence, as the Ivy Leaguers who had joined the CIA early in the cold war.

Casey is at one with most CIA people in harking back to the glory days of World War II, when the OSS recruited the best and the brightest to fight the good fight. Casey does not grasp that times have changed, that confronting Gorbachev or Gadhafi is hardly analogous to fighting Hitler, and that policy by nostalgia signifies intellectual bankruptcy.

This book is highly tendentious; its data is shaped and manipulated to bolster Casey's rationale for strong intelligence systems, and not to investigate what the OSS actually accomplished.

The thrust is that powerful outside (translation: American) support will rouse indigenous peoples against their oppressors. The analogies to the contra war are obvious.

Nowhere does this lawyer, making a politically tinged case, strike a balance. Writing history requires readiness to question received truths. So politicalized a person as William Casey might have written an intriguing memoir, but a history? Never.

Reviewed by Leonard Bushkoff for the Christian Science Monitor.